

TWO HITHERTO UNNAMED POPULATIONS OF *AECHMOPHORUS* (AVES: PODICIPITIDAE)

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Abstract.—The Mexican nesting populations of *Aechmophorus occidentalis* are named *A. o. ephemeralis*, and the larger birds of the northern populations of *Aechmophorus clarkii* in the United States and Canada are named *A. c. transitionalis*.

The Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) was named as *Podiceps occidentalis* by Lawrence (1858:892, 894), from "Pacific coast from Washington Territory to California" (=Fort Steilacoom, Washington, fide American Ornithologists' Union Checklist, 6th Edition [1983]). On the following page Lawrence described *Podiceps clarkii*. These were dark-backed, dark-lored and pale-backed, white-lored forms, respectively. Two of the three specimens of *clarkii* listed by Lawrence were wintering birds from California of the large, pale morph that occurs throughout the range of the species in the United States and Canada. Deignan (1961:7-8) pointed out that the third specimen, from Laguna Santa Maria, Chihuahua, should be considered the type of *P. clarkii*, and Dickerman (1963) redundantly so restricted the type locality. The critical differences between the two morphs are the yellow-orange bill and white face of the pale morph, and darker bill and black face of the dark morph (Storer 1965); but all color characters are highly variable (Storer and Nuechterlein 1985).

Podiceps clarkii was considered a synonym of *A. occidentalis* until 1963, when Dickerman (1963) demonstrated the lack in overlap in wing chord measurements (and very little overlap in bill length) between northern and Mexican populations, and recognized *clarkii* as a small subspecies with pale and dark morphs as in nominate *occidentalis*. Mayr and Short (1970:29) over-

looked or ignored the 1963 paper, stating "no races are recognized."

Later, Dickerman (1973) further characterized the small Mexican subspecies. He also pointed out that there was a degree of geographical segregation of the two morphs, in that more specimens from the central plateau and northern Mexico were of the pale type, while more from the western and southern portions of the plateau were of the dark morph. However, the trenchant characteristic of the Mexican versus northern populations is the small size of Mexican birds.

In the ensuing years, studies of the breeding behavior of northern populations (see review in Storer and Nuechterlein 1985) indicated than an apparently significant degree of assortative mating occurs between the two morphs. Based on this, the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (AOU 1985) concluded that the two color morphs should be recognized by the specific names *Aechmophorus occidentalis* and *A. clarkii*. This decision was made in the absence of studies of the critical Mexican populations, and is contrary to recommendations published earlier in the same volume of the Auk (Storer and Nuechterlein 1985). Further, starch gel electrophoresis revealed no significant difference between the two color morphs in preliminary studies (Ratti 1979).

In view of the AOU Committee's decision, and in view of the great size disparity

between birds of the northern and southern populations, it now becomes necessary to name the large pale northern population and the small dark southern population. These may now be known as:

Aechmophorus occidentalis ephemeralis,
new subspecies

Holotype.—Adult male, American Museum of Natural History 708,559, collected at Laguan de San Pedro Lagunillas, Nayarit, Mexico, 25 May 1962 by Robert W. Dickerman; field number RWD 10650. Additional data: with a large young; weight 1050 gms.; pectoral muscles 17 and 16.3 gms.; moderately to rather fat; extent 851 mm.; wing chord 179 mm., culmen (from anterior edge of nostril) 56.7 mm., tarsus 70.4 mm.

Diagnosis.—Small, inseparable in size from the co-existing population of *A. clarkii*, but dark-colored as in nominate *occidentalis*.

Distribution.—Specimens recorded to date from Nayarit, western Jalisco, Puebla and Guerro (Dickerman 1973).

Aechmophorus clarkii transitionalis, new
subspecies

Holotype.—Adult male, National Museum of Natural History 158016, collected at Silver Lake, Lake County, Oregon, 22 Jun 1897 by Vernon Bailey; original number 20. Additional data: wing cord 194 mm., culmen (from anterior edge of nostril) 63.4 mm., tarsus 77.5 mm.

Diagnosis.—Large, similar in size to nominate *A. occidentalis*, but coloration pale as in *A. clarkii*.

Distribution.—Sympatric with *A. o. occidentalis* in western North America, north of the Mexican border, becoming rarer northwards.

Discussion.—For detailed size comparison of nominate *A. o. occidentalis* and *A.*

clarkii transitionalis see Storer and Nuechterlein (1985).

Acknowledgments

I thank M. Ralph Browning for his selection and measurement of the type of *A. clarkii transitionalis*, and Kenneth C. Parkes and Robert W. Storer for their comments on the manuscript.

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